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**NASA/ASEE SUMMER FACULTY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM****MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT HUNTSVILLE****NASA AMBASSADORS: A SPEAKER OUTREACH PROGRAM****Prepared By:**

Malcolm W. McDonald, Ph.D.

**Academic Rank:**

Associate Professor

**Institution and Department:**Berry College  
School of Math & Nat. Sciences  
Physics Department**NASA/MSFC:****Office:**

Public Affairs Office

**Division:**

Public Services

**Branch:**

Community Relations

**MSFC Colleague:**

Ed Medal



## **Introduction**

The work done on this project this summer has been geared toward setting up the necessary infrastructure and planning to support the operation of an effective speaker outreach program. The program has been given the name, NASA AMBASSADORS. Also, individuals who become participants in the program will be known as "NASA AMBASSADORS". This summer project has been conducted by the joint efforts of this author and those of Professor George Lebo who will be issuing a separate report.

The description in this report will indicate that the NASA AMBASSADOR program operates largely on the contributions of volunteers, with the assistance of persons at the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC). The volunteers include participants in the various summer programs hosted by MSFC as well as members of the NASA Alumni League. The MSFC summer participation programs include: the Summer Faculty Fellowship Program for college and university professors, the Science Teacher Enrichment Program for middle- and high-school teachers, and the NASA ACADEMY program for college and university students. The NASA Alumni League members are retired NASA employees, scientists, and engineers.

The MSFC offices which will have roles in the operation of the NASA AMBASSADORS include the Educational Programs Office and the Public Affairs Office. It is possible that still other MSFC offices may become integrated into the operation of the program. The remainder of this report will establish the operational procedures which will be necessary to sustain the NASA AMBASSADOR speaker outreach program.

## **Program Operation**

Participation as a NASA AMBASSADOR begins with the submission of an application to become a NASA AMBASSADOR candidate. It is planned that those who make application will come from the participants in the MSFC summer programs, though the possibility is open for current or former NASA employees to be included in the program. Application for candidacy to become a NASA AMBASSADOR involves signing an agreement which stipulates the commitment expected of both, the candidate and NASA.

The NASA AMBASSADOR candidate agrees to make at least two presentations per year to audiences external to the home institution for each presentation package requested. The candidate also agrees to provide essential feedback information to the office in charge at MSFC for each presentation made. The feedback is in the form of a reply card submitted by the candidate documenting simple pertinent statistics about the presentation and the audience and in the form of one-page evaluation forms filled in by members of the audience and returned by a member of the audience organization, presumably the program chair. If, at the end of one year, the performance and feedback support the decision the candidate becomes a NASA AMBASSADOR.

In the agreement signed by the NASA AMBASSADOR candidate NASA agrees to provide the pre-packaged presentation materials. NASA also agrees to keep the talks up to date by mailing to NASA AMBASSADORS update kits related to the topics for which they have been supplied presentation packages. NASA also agrees to provide contacts for the ambassadors with NASA technical experts knowledgeable of the presentation topics. NASA also will seek to recognize outstanding NASA AMBASSADOR performance with some type of commendation or award.

The operation of the program involves an annual cycle of five different task areas, with most of the tasks being undertaken during the summer months while the summer faculty and teachers are present at MSFC. The five task areas are: **preparation** of new presentations, **updating** of existing presentations, **recruitment** of NASA AMBASSADORS, **production** (duplicating of materials and assembling packages for distribution), and routine academic-year **operations** required to shepherd and maintain the program.

The **preparation** of new presentations will take place during the summers at MSFC. The NASA AMBASSADOR program will be promoted to the MSFC summer participants at the beginning of each summer. Volunteers will be enlisted to work with other volunteers throughout the summer to create informative and appealing talks for use in the program. The volunteers will review the talk contents for accuracy with NASA experts. They will also present the talks internally to the summer volunteer group in order to measure reaction. The textual and visual materials needed to create each talk will be collected by the end of the summer, and the presentation will be ready for the production phase.

The **updating** of the existing talks, as needed, will also occur during the summer months. In this cycle the feedback submitted from the NASA AMBASSADORS and their audiences will be analyzed to look for hints that any of the presentations might be improved or brought more up to date. The review process will also utilize the contributions of a local NASA technical expert in the area of the topic. The updating work will lead to the creation of update packets or kits which will be mailed to the NASA AMBASSADORS in possession of those topics. The update material will also be integrated into all copies of the presentation packages in inventory, awaiting distribution.

The **recruitment** of new NASA AMBASSADOR candidates will occur primarily during the summer. At the beginning of the summer, as the various MSFC participation programs get underway, visual promotion presentations will be made to the summer participants and materials describing the program will be distributed. The distributed materials will include forms for applying for candidacy in the NASA AMBASSADOR program. A final appeal will be made toward the end of the summer, and applications for candidacy will accepted and forwarded to the office in charge of the program.

The **production** phase will occur from the end of the summer into the early fall (approximately August to October). This phase will be conducted largely by the resources of the office in charge of the program, with some assistance available from the local branch of the NASA Alumni League. Production includes the reproducing of text and visual materials and the assembling of

the presentation packages with all the necessary enclosures (text, slide sets, welcoming letter explaining the candidacy program, and instructions for utilizing the package). The final step in the production process is to transport the ready-to-mail packages to the distribution center.

The general year-round **operations** of the program are concentrated during the non-summer months. This involves the "nuts-and-bolts" procedures which must be happening year round to enable the program to be maintained. The continuing procedures which must be happening during the operation phase would include the following:

1. The NASA AMBASSADOR schedules and delivers at least two talks per package per year.
2. The NASA AMBASSADOR returns the feedback form to MSFC for each presentation made.
3. The evaluation forms and feedback are received and logged by the MSFC office.
4. AN MSFC office maintains a database of information on each ambassador.
5. The evaluation forms are reviewed and analyzed on an annual basis and individualized feedback on the results are assembled and mailed to each ambassador.
6. The office in charge maintains a point of contact to field inquiries and requests from the ambassadors.
7. The office in charge issues mailing instructions for the distribution of packages.
8. The office in charge sends a letter to the president of the ambassador's home institution to acknowledge the selection and participation of the NASA AMBASSADOR.
9. The Public Affairs Office sends an annual press release to the home newspaper of the NASA AMBASSADOR.

### **Status of the planning**

The summer of 1996 (last summer) served as a test bed for the summer activities described in the procedures above. Approximately a dozen volunteers from the summer programs met regularly (two times per week) throughout the summer. The results were the creation of four talks which were brought to fruition and the major work done on two other talks. Currently, the four completed talks have been reproduced and assembled into packages ready to be mailed or distributed. In addition, approximately forty summer participants from the summer of 1996 applied to be included in the NASA AMBASSADOR program. These facts make it clear that the program has a definite appeal to many of the summer faculty and teachers who are eager to have and to deliver the presentations.

The four ready-to-distribute talks are entitled:

- "NASA: The Place Where Miracles Happen" (spin-offs of the space program),
- "Rocket Ships",
- "Mars in Fact and Fiction", and
- "Spacecraft Charging".

Two other presentation topics nearing completion are entitled:

“Extending Our Senses Beyond Our Reach” (Hubble and other space telescopes),  
“To Lead, Or Not to Lead” (the wise investment in NASA programs).

Other topics under consideration for the creation of presentations include the areas of:  
The International Space Station,  
The Mission to Mars, and  
The Quest for Origins of Life.

### **Conclusion**

The NASA AMBASSADOR program is a speaker outreach effort whose time has arrived. It is able to capitalize on the considerable talents and enthusiasm for NASA programs displayed by many of the faculty and teachers who participate in the summer programs at the Marshall Space Flight Center. They have the ability and the willingness to take back to their home environments the NASA-related talks which the program is being geared to place in their hands. This outstanding outreach effort will be rendered by the NASA AMBASSADOR volunteers, at virtually no cost to NASA. They will offer to the public audiences the kind of information about NASA which a great majority of the public looks forward to hearing. Finally, the audiences to which the presentations will be made typically will include those members of the local community who are counted among the opinion makers in the community and who display an interest in all the happenings and decisions rendered at the local, state, and national levels.